

THE ABC'S OF ARTIFACTS

Grade Level: 3 to 5

IN THIS LESSON

Students will learn the ABC's of historical inquiry by conducting original research about an artifact and writing and illustrating an ABC book as a class.

OBJECTIVES

- To develop habits of historical inquiry by analyzing visual evidence
- To develop interpretive, writing, and artistic skills
- To make connections between literacy and social studies
- To make connections between the past and the present

ILLINOIS LEARNING STANDARDS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Goal 3: Write to communicate for a variety of purposes.

Goal 4: Listen and speak effectively in a variety of situations.

Goal 5: Use the language arts to acquire, assess, and communicate information.

SOCIAL SCIENCE

Goal 16: Understand events, trends, individuals, and movements shaping the history of Illinois, the United States, and other nations.

SUGGESTED ARTIFACTS

Please note: This lesson plan can work with any collection of artifacts, especially if the artifacts represent many different letters of the alphabet.

Wooden meat club/tenderizer

Souvenir spoon from the 1893 World's Fair

Brass spittoon

Iron trivet

Candle lantern

Horseshoe

Metal roller skates (c. 1950s)

Manual food grinder

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

ABC History Mystery by the Chicago Historical Society available at the Chicago History Museum store or online at <http://www.chicagotogo.org/abchimy.html>

Chart paper

Writing paper

Markers or colored pencils

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ACTIVITY

Note: This lesson is greatly enriched by a field trip to the Chicago History Museum, where many of the artifacts in the book *ABC History Mystery* are on display!

DAY 1

1. Review the definition of an artifact with the class. (An artifact is something made and used by people in the past.) Share your artifact kit. If you have taken a field trip to the Chicago History Museum, encourage students to remember the artifacts they saw on display.
2. Read *ABC History Mystery* aloud. The last few pages of the book contain brief background information on each artifact pictured. You can read some of this information to the class as you go through the alphabet.
3. Use the following questions to have a brief conversation with students about the book: What was the most interesting artifact to you? Which artifacts are most similar to things we use today? What else would you like to know about these artifacts? Why do you think the Chicago History Museum has collected all of these artifacts?
4. Brainstorm a list of general artifacts, including categories like photographs, clothing, furniture, transportation, and more. Remind students that artifacts can be both two- and three-dimensional. Make the list on chart paper, so you can post it for the next class period. Tell students that they will be making their own artifact ABC book as a class.

DAY 2

1. Assign each student a letter of the alphabet. You can do this by writing each letter on an index card and having everyone draw from the pile. Depending on class size, you may have to assign two letters to one student or have two students double up on a letter.
2. Tell students that they must choose an artifact that corresponds to their letter of the alphabet, just like *ABC History Mystery*. They can choose anything from your artifact kit, anything they have seen on a field trip, an item from home, or other artifacts they may come across in their research. Share your artifact kit and refer to the list created last period to help generate ideas. Once students have an idea for an artifact, give them time to research it using books and websites.

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3. During their research, each student should take notes in order to create a draft paragraph of background information, like those at the end of *ABC History Mystery*. Give students the rest of this period to research and write. Check in with them individually to approve their artifact choices. Be prepared to help students with tough letters like "X" and "Q." Depending on time, students may need to finish the draft paragraph as a home connection.

DAY 3

1. Distribute paper and markers or colored pencils to students. Students will copy their drafts onto a clean sheet of paper, then draw and color a picture of their artifact. Remind them to include their letter of the alphabet. It should be large, bright, and colorful so it stands out on the page.
2. Once everyone has finished their pages, bind them together into a book. Have the class brainstorm and vote on a title for the book. Read it aloud.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Great Chicago Stories, a suite of historical fiction narratives and related classroom activities, was inspired by artifacts in the collection of the Chicago History Museum, many of which are currently on display. Use the artifact images associated with the stories to jog students' memories of their field trip or to introduce them to a wide variety of artifacts from throughout our city's history. (www.greatchicagostories.org)

Make color copies of the students' ABC book that they can read aloud to another class, perhaps a younger grade level. When finished, encourage students to bring the copy home to share with their family.